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SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE TRAINING SCHOOL

BY JESSIE L. MACDONALD, R.N.

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Throughout the centuries man has dreamed of the time when he should be emancipated from continuous toil. The labor unions strove for decades to reduce the working day from twelve to ten hours, and then to eight; each new gain being hailed as a triumph of the spirit which gave an opportunity for recreation, education, and all of the things which make life worth while.

The church to-day, to which has come a vision of its opportunities, feels the necessity of recreation in its program of religious educational activities.

It is impossible to go into the details of the psychology of play, but too much cannot be said of its importance in human life, of the value of the play spirit carried over into work, giving zest to life and work, because of its joyousness, but the point is established that play and recreation have a definite relationship to all education.

The nursing profession with its intimate contact with the sick, and its wonderful opportunity for service to humanity, might well become the ideal life to which we aspire.

There are many reasons why recreation is necessary. First, that the nurse may maintain her proper standard of health; second, that she may continue to grow mentally; third, that she may be successful in her profession as, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"; fourth, that she may not only enjoy life but that her energy and spirit may be such that out of her enjoyment she may give to those unto whom she ministers.

The nursing profession is now speaking of the hospital training school in terms of an educational institution,—should we not then endeavor to mould our curriculum as such? Yet how seldom we find a definite place given to any class of a recreational nature, or organized activities for play. How few of us catalogue the advantages offered in our large western cities, or plan trips of pleasure and education for our students.

We have one decided advantage over the average educational institution, in that our theory and practice may be worked out together. Our large clinical field is always at our command, but we have much to learn in our social and educational fields.

¹Read at a meeting of the Illinois State Nurses' Association, Moline, Ill., December, 1919.

In our training school, we have found instruction in physical education a decided advantage in our curriculum. The student nurses have weekly classes in corrective gymnastic exercises, and in social dancing, with monthly class parties. The expense of instruction and orchestra is provided for by the training school committee of the board. There is also a tennis court which is converted into a skating rink during the winter months.

This is but a beginning. When we realize what is being done in recreational education for the students of our universities, colleges and high schools; we feel that hospital training schools have but awakened to their responsibilities in this branch of work.

Another of our problems is connected with the housing of our students. Many of us are dealing with the problem of inadequate homes which do not meet our modern ideas, and with the present high cost of living, the outlook is not bright for a new home in the near future. Much may be done, however, to make our homes more attractive and comfortable for the student. Reception rooms may be refurnished; libraries may have new books added, with current magazines. There may be small, equipped laundries with pressing rooms, where nurses may wash perishable garments which they may not be able to send elsewhere; a sewing room where mending may be taken care of; kitchenettes, where nurses may make fudge or prepare and serve group lunches so dear to the heart of every student.

With the thought of the nurses' home comes the problem of the supervision of the rooms. The most satisfactory solution of this problem, to us, has been our matron, who, while supervising the work of the maids, is able to give individual care and attention to nurses requiring reminders to keep their rooms in order. Many colleges use the score card system. By this, the student scores her own room. Usually the low grade she is forced to give herself proves sufficient stimulus for neatness and order.

The problem of student government, versus modified military government, is a difficult one to solve. Military discipline is apt to develop fear of penalty, rather than honor and trust, and the tendency of the disciplinarian is to become an autocrat.

We often have outward conformity without inward consent. Student government develops the individual pupil, it stresses expression rather than repression. There are three levels of conduct a student will follow: 1, Instinctive, doing that which her instinct prompts her to do; 2, conventional, where she will do that which custom or convention calls for; 3, conscious choice, where reason operates from growth. It requires courage and vision to establish student government which must be almost a process of evolution,

emphasis being placed upon loyalty to the hospital and the guarding of its reputation. Also there is danger on the part of the student of confusing liberty with license.

With student government, the problems of late permission and over-staying of leave are, of course, dealt with by student body officers. Why is it that the universities and colleges do not find it necessary to regulate the number of evenings that a student may spend off the campus, while students in a hospital training school are rarely granted more than one late permission weekly?

The problem of the eight-hour day has been thoroughly demonstrated as not only possible, but profitable, giving the student time for her class work, study, and recreation, also to live the life of a healthy, normal, and energetic young woman. To-day, a student choosing a vocation asks herself regarding the possible growth of that profession, and how it will fit her as an individual to play her part in the scheme of life.

TOO LATE FOR CLASSIFICATION

National.—THE NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS ASSOCIATION will hold its sixteenth annual meeting at the Hotel Statler, St. Louis, Mo., April 22-24. The Nursing Section, with Edna L. Foley of Chicago as chairman, will hold two sessions.

Kentucky.—THE KENTUCKY STATE BOARD OF NURSE EXAMINERS will hold semi-annual examination May 25, 26, 1920, at the City Hospital, Louisville, for the registration of graduate nurses. For applications and other information, apply to Flora E. Keen, secretary, Somerset.